

UltraVision transforms older monitors

If you have an EGA monitor, chances are you haven't been using it fully. An inexpensive program called UltraVision will coax VGA-like performance out of some EGA monitors.

UltraVision (from Personics, 63 Great Road, Maynard, Mass. 01754, \$119.95) is a hardware and software upgrade package for the Enhanced Graphics Adapter (EGA) screens that came with most IBM ATs in 1986 and 1987. It transforms the older monitors so that they perform much like the newer Video Graphics Array (VGA) ones that came with the IBM PS/2s introduced in 1988.

Unfortunately, it offers only a marginal improvement in some cases, and it doesn't apply at all to the older Color Graphics Adapter (CGA) monitors supplied in 1984 and 1985.

Here are some of the improvements it is designed to provide:

- Expand your EGA monitor's color display. UltraVision unlocks the 64-color palette that's possible — but seldom used — with EGA.



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Normally the range of colors is limited to an "active color set" of 16 colors. One of this program's utilities is it displays all 64 colors at once.

- Change the fonts of your text display. Instead of

being limited to one font style, UltraVision offers a library of screen fonts that you can choose from.

- Increase text resolution on multiscanning monitors. Regular EGA forms each character from a grid composed of 8 dots wide and 14 dots high. UltraVision boosts the number of dots per grid to a more pleasing 9 by 19. This is only possible, however, for a certain type of EGA monitor called "multiscan," which are in use by a relatively small percentage of users.

- Expand the columns and rows displayed on your screen. UltraVi-

sion can expand your overview of documents, spreadsheets, and data entry screens from 80 columns by 25 rows to 132 by 43.

UltraVision also has an option — called Directory Expander — that spices up directory listings. Not only can you display 43 lines of directory names, but you can pause when the screen fills up (regular EGA pauses at 25 lines) and, using the DOS wide display option (DIR/W), you can add more columns per screen.

As a final touch, you can color code files by their extension.

Installing UltraVision varies according to the type of EGA monitor and display card you have. For many display cards there's a hardware component — an included piggy-back board — that needs to be installed in an otherwise idle socket. It's easy to do, but does require some familiarity with working "under the hood" of your computer.

On the downside, there's a limit to how far EGA can be pushed into the world of VGA. Even VGA is

considered old fashioned by some. The higher resolution Super VGA (also called extended VGA or VGA Plus) is currently in the forefront and out of reach of UltraVision.

- The Bottom Line. With the certainty that standards will change in the future, UltraVision is a low-cost half-step that makes sense if you presently own an EGA monitor and use color graphics every day. Especially if you have a multiscan monitor, it allows you to ease into the hi-res realm of VGA as cheaply as possible. I'd hold off on those expensive VGA monitor and video card upgrades until the technology improves more dramatically. If you're going to go this route, however, be sure to check ahead of time how well this product will work with your particular equipment and programs.

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